

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 168

By Tate

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate Al Bell upon his receipt of the 2011 Grammy Trustee Award.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of the General Assembly should honor those exemplary individuals who have contributed significantly to Tennessee's diverse and dynamic culture, winning national and international acclaim for their endeavors in the field of music; and

WHEREAS, the music impresario Mr. Al Bell is one such estimable individual who brought "the Memphis Sound" to music fans around the world as the driving force behind the legendary Stax Records, and he was recently honored with the receipt of the 2011 Grammy Trustee Award; and

WHEREAS, born Alvertis Isabell in Brinkley, Arkansas, in 1940, Al Bell put himself through college by working as a gospel music disc jockey before coming to Memphis and Stax Records in 1965; and

WHEREAS, serving as national sales director with special responsibility for promotion, Mr. Bell was the first person to classify and brand the Stax Records product as "the Memphis Sound"; and

WHEREAS, quickly becoming an integral part of Stax, Al Bell helped guide Stax's artistic direction, combining the raw, funky compositions that defined the Stax sound with string arrangements that characterized a more refined pop music; and

WHEREAS, as president of Stax Records, Mr. Bell would see the label produce gold and platinum hits for various talented artists, including Isaac Hayes, Otis Redding, the Staple Singers, Sam and Dave, Booker T and the MG's, the Bar-Kays, Richard Pryor, and Bill Cosby; and

WHEREAS, Stax worked with Melvin Van Peebles on the release of his revolutionary film, *Sweetback*, and with MGM Studios on the release of the film, *Shaft*, demonstrating marketing and promotional techniques that informed the film industry of the potential in the African-American marketplace and led to the Black film renaissance of the 1970s; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Bell added to his list of box office hits with the landmark 1973 film, *Wattstax*, a documentary based on a Stax Records concert that entertained 100,000 people from Los Angeles and Watts, California, in the Los Angeles Stadium, and was the largest musical event ever presented to Black America; and

WHEREAS, in the 1980s, Al Bell became the head of the Motown Records Group and worked with Berry Gordy in the sale of Motown to the MCA/Boston Ventures Group; and

WHEREAS, after his success at Motown, Mr. Bell discovered the music group, Tag Team, and there released “Whoomp! There It Is,” which sold over five million single units as one of the biggest selling singles in the history of the music industry; and

WHEREAS, Al Bell was also asked by music artist, Prince, to release a single record for him, after Prince’s label, Warner Brother Records, turned him down. Using his unique style of marketing and promotion, Mr. Bell released “The Most Beautiful Girl in the World,” and gave Prince his biggest selling single ever; and

WHEREAS, throughout his estimable career, Mr. Bell has received numerous honors and awards, including Executive of the Year; he received the National Leadership Award from the National Business League in 1972 and 1973, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People’s Founder’s Award in 1975, and was inducted into America’s Music and Entertainment Hall of Fame in 1980; and

WHEREAS, he also received the Gospel Music Award of the Year from the Southeast Music Conference in 1993, the NARM INDIE Best Seller Award for “Whoomp! There It Is” in 1994, and, in 2010, Mr. Bell received the W. C. Handy Lifetime Achievement Award and was inducted into the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, a resident of Little Rock, Arkansas, Al Bell is most grateful for the love and companionship he shares with family, including his son, Jonathan, and his two grandsons; and

WHEREAS, Al Bell epitomizes the spirit and commitment that are characteristic of a true Tennessean, and this General Assembly finds it appropriate to pause in its deliberations to acknowledge and applaud Mr. Bell for his accomplishments; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend Al Bell for his meritorious service to the State of Tennessee, congratulate him on winning the 2011 Grammy Trustee Award, and extend to him our best wishes for every future success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.